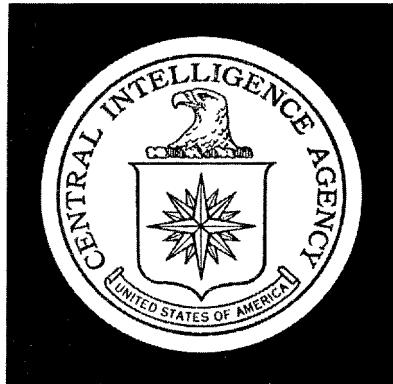


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Singapore: By unexpectedly calling new elections, Prime Minister Lee appears to be seeking a mandate to deal with problems arising from Britain's accelerated withdrawal.

A general election was due this year, but the government had been expected to wait until late summer or early autumn. The cabinet's decision on 7 February to dissolve Parliament means elections must be held within three months.

Britain had planned to maintain a military presence in Southeast Asia until the mid-1970s, but under its recently revised timetable the British phaseout is scheduled to be completed by the end of 1971.

British forces now provide most of Singapore's security requirements, and Singapore's leaders hope to meet these in the future both by increasing substantially the nation's own military capability and by the conclusion of some form of regional security arrangement.

In economic terms, the UK bases in Singapore have accounted for 20 percent of the island's gross national product, provided employment for 6 percent of the labor force, and contributed US \$175 million annually in foreign exchange.

Lee and the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) are expected to win handily. There is no meaningful opposition party and electoral districts were recently redrawn to favor PAP candidates.

Thailand: The ruling military leadership has taken an important step toward a return to constitutional government.

The appointed Constituent Assembly concluded its final reading of the new constitution on 8 February, thereby concluding a drafting process begun nine years ago. There is only one remaining legislative hurdle when the Assembly on 22 February is to vote whether to forward the constitution for the King's signature.

Although the regime can still cause delay, the fact that it permitted the third reading suggests that it is now committed to an early promulgation. Successful completion of local elections last month also has contributed to momentum toward political change and has made it more difficult for the military leadership to stall much longer.

Nonetheless, important government leaders are reluctant to upset internal stability while a Communist insurgent threat persists, and Bangkok has made clear that it intends to keep a tight rein on renewed political activity.

The draft constitution provides for lower house elections eight months after promulgation. The powers of the legislature are carefully circumscribed, and it is likely that the present leadership will continue to exercise effective power.

NOTES

West Germany - US: Demonstrations by radical leftist students at US installations in West Germany have been taking an increasingly violent turn. An especially bold assault was made early this week on the US Consulate in Frankfurt. US officials in Germany believe local authorities in Frankfurt were too lenient, and that this is encouraging the youthful agitators. The next target may be the US Consulate in Hamburg, where another major demonstration opposing the US role in Vietnam is planned for this weekend. [redacted]

Sudan: The Sudanese Government, fearing it would be ousted by a no-confidence vote engineered by opposition leader Sadiq al-Mahdi, on 7 February manipulated the dissolution of the Sudanese Constituent Assembly. The government hopes to hold new assembly elections in April. Sadiq stands little chance of returning to power in early elections and may now turn to his military supporters for help in dislodging the regime. The degree of his support within the army, as well as among influential civilians, is problematical, however. The authorities have thus far maintained comparative order in Khartoum. [redacted]

Congo (Kinshasa): President Mobutu now wishes to wash his hands of the foreign mercenary problem. He says he will propose at an OAU meeting scheduled for 19-23 February that the mercenaries be allowed to depart for Europe. Although he still believes these men should be punished, he apparently will attach no strings to their departure. Mobutu also says he hopes to re-establish relations with Rwanda, presumably after the mercenary issue is settled. [redacted]

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